

# **Selected Poems**

Thomas Love Peacock



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# Selected Poems

## Thomas Love Peacock

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## Castles in the Air

MY thoughts by night are often filled  
With visions false as fair:  
For in the past alone I build  
My castles in the air.

I dwell not now on what may be:  
Night shadows o'er the scene:  
But still my fancy wanders free  
Through that which might have been.

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**Duet**

Milestone: ALL my troubles disappear,  
When the dinner-bell I hear,  
Over woodland, dale, and fell,  
Swinging slow with solemn swell,—  
The dinner-bell! the dinner-bell!

Hippy: What can bid my heart-ache fly?  
What can bid my heart-ache die?  
What can all the ills dispel,  
In my morbid frame that dwell?  
The dinner-bell! the dinner-bell!

Both: Hark!—along the tangled ground,  
Loudly floats the pleasing sound!  
Sportive Fauns to Dryads tell,  
'Tis the cheerful dinner-bell!  
The dinner-bell! the dinner-bell!

## A Fragment

NAY, deem me not insensible, Cesario,  
To female charms; nor think this heart of mine  
Is cas'd in adamant; because, forsooth,  
I cannot ogle, and hyperbolize,  
And whisper tender nothings in the ear  
Of ev'ry would-be beauty, holding out  
The bright but treacherous flame of flattery,  
To watch the she-moths of a drawing room  
Sport round the beam, and burn their pretty wings,  
Ere conscious of their danger: yet, believe me,  
I love a maid whose untranscended form  
Is yet less lovely than her spotless mind.  
With modest frankness, unaffected genius,  
Unchang'd good humour, beauty void of art,  
And polish'd wit that seeks not to offend,  
And winning smiles that seek not to betray,  
She charms the sight, and fascinates the soul.  
Where dwells this matchless nymph? alas, Cesario,  
'Tis but a sickly creature of my fancy,  
Unparallel'd in nature.

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**A Glee**

QUICKLY pass the social glass,  
Hence with idle sorrow!  
No delay—enjoy today,  
Think not of tomorrow!  
Life at best is but a span,  
Let us taste it whilst we can;  
Let us still with smiles confess,  
All our aim is happiness!

Childish fears, and sighs and tears  
Still to us are strangers;  
Why destroy the bud of joy  
With ideal dangers?  
Let the song of pleasure swell;  
Care with us shall never dwell;  
Let us still with smiles confess,  
All our aim is happiness!

## I Dug, Beneath a Cypress Shade

I DUG, beneath a cypress shade,  
What well might seem an elfin's grave;  
And every pledge in earth I laid,  
That erst thy false affection gave.

I press'd them down the sod beneath;  
I placed one mossy stone above;  
And twined the rose's fading wreath  
Around the sepulchre of love.

Frail as thy love, the flowers were dead  
Ere yet the evening sun was set:  
But years shall see the cypress spread,  
Immutable as my regret.

## Instead of Sitting Wrapped up in Flannel

INSTEAD of sitting wrapped up in flannel  
With rheumatism in every joint,  
I wish I was in the English Channel,  
Just going 'round the Lizard Point  
All southward bound, with the seas before me,  
I should not care whether smooth or rough,  
For then no visitors would call to bore me,  
Of whose 'good-mornings' I have had enough.

## Life's Uncertain Day

THE briefest part of life's uncertain day,  
Youth's lovely blossom, hastes to swift decay:  
While love, wine, song, enhance our gayest mood  
Old age creeps on, nor thought, nor understood.

## Lines on the Death of Julia

ACCEPT, bright spirit, reft in life's best bloom  
This votive wreath to thy untimely tomb.  
Formed to adorn all scenes, and charm in all,  
The fire-side circle, and the courtly hall;  
Thy friends to gladden, and thy home to bless;—  
Fair form thou hadst, and grace, and graciousness;  
A mind that sought, a tongue that spoke, the truth,  
And thought mature beneath the smiles of youth.  
Dear, dear young friend! ingenuous, cordial heart!  
And can it be, that thou shouldst first depart?  
That age should sorrow o'er thy youthful shrine?  
It owns more near, more sacred griefs than mine;  
Yet, midst the many who thy loss deplore,  
Few loved thee better, and few mourn thee more.

## Love and Age

I PLAY'D with you 'mid cowslips blowing,  
When I was six and you were four;  
When garlands weaving, flower-balls throwing,  
Were pleasures soon to please no more.  
Through groves and meads, o'er grass and heather,  
With little playmates, to and fro,  
We wander'd hand in hand together;  
But that was sixty years ago.

You grew a lovely roseate maiden,  
And still our early love was strong;  
Still with no care our days were laden,  
They glided joyously along;  
And I did love you very dearly,  
How dearly words want power to show;  
I thought your heart was touch'd as nearly;  
But that was fifty years ago.

Then other lovers came around you,  
Your beauty grew from year to year,  
And many a splendid circle found you  
The centre of its glimmering sphere.  
I saw you then, first vows forsaking,  
On rank and wealth your hand bestow;  
O, then I thought my heart was breaking!—  
But that was forty years ago.

And I lived on, to wed another:  
No cause she gave me to repine;  
And when I heard you were a mother,  
I did not wish the children mine.  
My own young flock, in fair progression,  
Made up a pleasant Christmas row:  
My joy in them was past expression;  
But that was thirty years ago.

You grew a matron plump and comely,  
You dwelt in fashion's brightest blaze;  
My earthly lot was far more homely;  
But I too had my festal days.  
No merrier eyes have ever glisten'd  
Around the hearth-stone's wintry glow,  
Than when my youngest child was christen'd;  
But that was twenty years ago.

Time pass'd. My eldest girl was married,

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And I am now a grandsire gray;  
One pet of four years old I've carried  
Among the wild-flower'd meads to play.  
In our old fields of childish pleasure,  
Where now, as then, the cowslips blow,  
She fills her basket's ample measure;  
And that is not ten years ago.

But though first love's impassion'd blindness  
Has pass'd away in colder light,  
I still have thought of you with kindness,  
And shall do, till our last good-night.  
The ever-rolling silent hours  
Will bring a time we shall not know,  
When our young days of gathering flowers  
Will be an hundred years ago.

**Margaret Love Peacock**

LONG night succeeds thy little day;  
Oh blighted blossom! can it be,  
That this grey stone, and grassy clay,  
Have clos'd our anxious care of thee?

The half-form'd speech of artless thought  
That spoke a mind beyond thy years;  
The song, the dance, by nature taught;  
The sunny smiles, the transient tears;

The symmetry of face and form,  
The eye with light and life replete;  
The little heart so fondly warm,  
The voice so musically sweet;

These, lost to hope, in memory yet  
Around the hearts that lov'd thee cling,  
Shadowing, with long and vain regret,  
The too fair promise of thy spring.

## Newark Abbey

August, 1842  
with a remembrance of August, 1807

I GAZE, where August's sunbeam falls  
Along these grey and lonely walls,  
Till in its light absorbed appears  
The lapse of five-and-thirty years.

If change there be, I trace it not  
In all this consecrated spot:  
No new imprint of Ruin's march  
On roofless wall and frameless arch:  
The hilss, the woods, the fields, the stream,  
Are basking in the self-same beam:  
The fall, that turns the unseen mill  
As then it murmured, murmurs still:  
It seems, as if in one were cast  
The present and the imaged past,  
Spanning, as with bridge sublime,  
That awful lapse of human time,  
That gulph, unfathomably spread  
Between the living and the dead.

For all too well my spirit feels  
The only change this place reveals:  
The sunbeams play, the breezes stir,  
Unseen, unfelt, unheard by her,  
Who, on that long-past August day,  
First saw with me those ruins grey.

Whatever span the fates allow,  
Ere I shall be as she is now,  
Still in my bosom's inmost cell  
Shall that deep-treasured memory dwell:  
That, more than language can express,  
Pure miracle of loveliness,  
Whose voice so sweet, whose eyes so bright,  
Were my soul's music, and its light,  
In those blest days, when life was new,  
And hope was false, but love was true.

## Rich Poor; or Saint Sinner

THE poor man's sins are glaring;  
In the face of ghostly warning  
    He is caught in the fact  
    Of an overt act——  
Buying greens on a Sunday morning.

The rich man's sins are hidden  
In the pomp of wealth and station;  
    And escape the sight  
    Of the children of light,  
Who are wise in their generation.

The rich man has a kitchen,  
And cooks to dress his dinner;  
    The poor who would roast  
    To the baker's must post,  
And thus becomes a sinner.

The rich man has a cellar,  
And a ready butler by him;  
    The poor man must steer  
    For his pint of beer  
Where the saint can't choose but to spy him.

The rich man's painted windows  
Hide the concerts of the quality;  
    The poor can but share  
    A crack'd fiddle in the air,  
Which offends all sound morality.

The rich man is invisible  
In the crowd of his gay society;  
    But the poor man's delight  
    Is a sore in the sight,  
And a stench in the nose of piety.

## There is a Fever of the Spirit

THERE is a fever of the spirit,  
The brand of Cain's unresting doom,  
Which in the lone dark souls that bear it  
Glow like the lamp in Tullia's tomb:

Unlike that lamp, its subtle fire  
Burns, blasts, consumes its cell, the heart,  
Till, one by one, hope, joy, desire,  
Like dreams of shadowy smoke depart.

When hope, love, life itself, are only  
Dust—spectral memories—dead and cold—  
The unfed fire burns bright and lonely,  
Like that undying lamp of old:

And by that drear illumination,  
Till time its clay-built home has rent,  
Thought broods on feeling's desolation  
The soul is its own monument.